

January, 1912.

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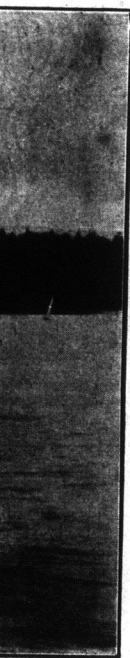
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cause I did not love you. Isn't your reasoning a little inconsistent, Helen?" He smiled, hoping to win an answering smile in return, but none was forthcoming. "You and I," he continued, persuasively, "are old enough to have sense, and it seems rather ridiculous that we should discuss our personal affairs in a somewhat crowded railway car. We shall have time for it after we get home, that is, if you should still desire to continue such an unpleasant subject."

"Very well," she acquiesced, with a quiet determination, suggesting that the subject was not finished.

He picked up his paper, folded it, and put it in his pocket, then began telling her about his European trip the previous year. In spite of the unanswered question that was lying heavily on her heart, she found herself listening interestedly to his vivid and racy descriptions.

The time passed quickly, and soon they were in their home town. A carriage was waiting, and after a short drive it drew up before a beautiful house and grounds. As they entered the hall door, he whispered tenderly: "Welcome home, Helen."

She made no reply, and any embarrassment was happily prevented by two children, a boy and a girl, running a race down the stairs to reach their father who had barely time to give his wife a chair in the drawing-room, when his children pounced upon him. While he submitted laughing to his son's boisterous demonstrations of gladness, he drew his little daughter towards him, saying, with a voice of deep love and tenderness, as he kissed the sweet lips upturned to his, "And how is my little Amy?" his wife read in his tone that this little one held the closest place in the father's heart.

"Who is she, father?" asked the boy, his eyes indicating whom he meant.

"That is your new mother, Kenneth and Amy," he answered, looking at Helen pleadingly, as though asking her not to repudiate the title. "Go and kiss her," he whispered.

The boy advanced with some hesitation and gave her a rather grimy hand, but turned his face to one side to escape her kiss, then retreated to his father's side, while he watched the newcomer with jealous eyes.

"Little Amy, on the contrary, came close to Helen, and, placing a chubby hand in hers, raised her lips to kiss her. Then, releasing her hand, she wound her arms round Helen's neck, saying: "I love you, muver. You look so sweet and pretty. Will you take me on your knee and hug me like May Graham's muver hugs her?"

"You little darling, of course, I will." She gathered the child in her arms and kissed her repeatedly, whispering fondly, "You will be mother's own little daughter."

The father turned away for a moment to conceal the deep emotion in his face, for he read in little Amy's words how her heart hungered for the mother's love she missed. Then, controlling his feelings, he said to the children: "Run away to nurse. Your mother is tired." Amy obeyed somewhat reluctantly, claiming one more kiss before she went.

Professor Douglas conducted his wife to her room, and after a few, though rather constrained, words, he sought his study, wondering greatly how his matrimonial riddle would be solved. Later, at dinner, it was conducive to his peace of mind to see her take her place at the head of his table, calm and dignified. He did not know that it was a calm after a storm that had shaken her soul to its depths.

"Come to the library, Helen," he said, as they rose from the table. "I think it the cosiest room in the house."

He showed her some of his favorite books and pictures, but she was not now to be diverted from the subject that was occupying both their minds, so she repeated her question—"Will you tell me now why you married me?"

"My home required a mistress, my children a mother. Will this answer do, Helen?" he replied, mentally determining that she should never know any other reason.

"It will do until I learn the real one," she returned quietly, with something in



Prince Rupert Harbour, B.C.

her tone implying that she was wholly unconvinced.

He made no reply, so she continued. "I have often wondered why your first letter was so different from the others that followed. Have I disappointed you in any way?" she asked wistfully.

"No, no, Helen. You are far too good for me. I will be a true and faithful husband to you. My children need you, my home needs you, and—and—I need you." He spoke passionately, breaking through his habitual reserve.

Your children require a governess, you a housekeeper," she repeated mechanically. "From mere selfish motives you have selected me. You have taken me from a home where I was happy and loved to bear these responsibilities without love. Had I dreamed of your real motive, I would never have consented. However, for the sake of your position, I will remain and—and endeavor to do my duty."

She looked at him, but he continued silent with his head bowed upon his hand. Her voice hardened as she went on. "I will go with you into society, entertain your guests, look carefully after your children and house." She hesitated, as though gathering courage, then resumed in the same cold voice from which all hope seemed to have departed. "For these services I wish a stated salary. I—"

"Hush, Helen, I beg of you," he pleaded brokenly. "All that I possess is yours."

"I wish a salary," she coldly persisted. "Whatever your income will allow me. I am your wife in name only, so I shall have no need for this," placing her wedding ring on the table beside him.

"Helen, I implore you!"

"Where is my pretty muver?" came from a little white-robed figure that had tiptoed to the door unheard.

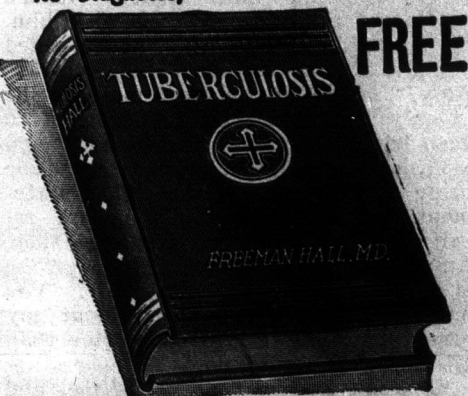
"Nurse put me to bed, but I runned away to kiss you good-night. She ran to Helen and clambered up into her lap and kissed her with all a child's abandon of love for its mother. "Why, father, muver is crying. You musn't make my pretty muver cry."

The limit of his endurance was reached. He rose hurriedly, leaving his wife holding his child closely in her arms.

He dreaded their meeting the next morning, but there was no need. Through the sad, dark, sleepless hours of the night she had planned her course of action. She faced her position squarely, and decided that if she could not overcome its difficulties she at least would meet them bravely. As the days passed, Amy was her delight and joy. All the mother love of her heart was given to the loving, affectionate, little child. With Kenneth it was different.

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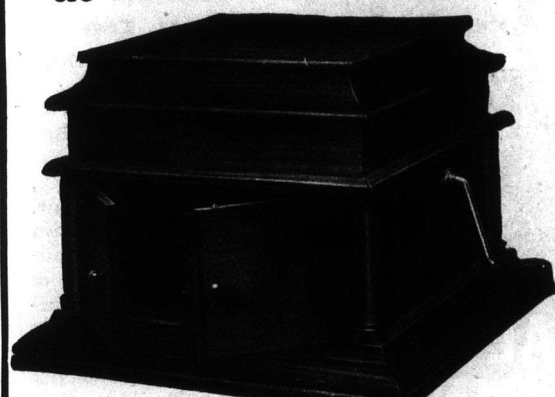
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